

Ladies and Gentlemen of the appropriations committee. My name is Rosemary Yvonne Smith, and I live in Torrington Connecticut. I am here to oppose the funding cut proposal for the Centers for Independent Living in the current BRS budget proposal. If the Centers for Independent Living do not have the funding that is needed they will be forced to close down. This will leave many people who are disabled now as well as in the future without the information and life skills that they can learn from these centers.

One of the programs that is provided through Centers for Independent Living is Money Follows the Person. This program helps people that are living in nursing home situations to transition out of them and return to life in the community again. I myself was a resident of a nursing home for 2yrs, at the age of 65 I was placed in the nursing facility as a full time resident. The reason why I was placed in the facility was due to being hospitalized for over a month in a coma, and when I came out of it my family was afraid for me to live on my own. While I was being rehabilitated, I heard about the program Money Follows the person through the Independence Northwest Transition Coordinator. The coordinator showed me how there were other people that were transitioning out of the facility out into the surrounding communities and I became interested in what the program had to offer.

I now have been living on my own taking care of myself as well as all of my affairs on my own for over a year now, thanks to the Money Follows the Person program. Through the program I was able to relocate closer to my daughter and grandchildren who I get to see on an constant basis, but while in the facility I was only able to see them 4 or 5 times in the entire two years I was there due to transportation issues. With being able to live independently I can participate in the various activities and events that are provided in the community, the senior center, and travel by public transportation on my own. In the building where I live, i there are many activities that I attend, many friends that I have made, but to be able to be on my own, cook my own meals, while being independent has given me my life back. Without the transition coordinator helping me to see that I could live independently again and make it, I might still be living in the same facility today away from my family. While the Independence Northwest transition coordinator has been able to help myself as well as many others, it would devastate me to know that because of a cut in the funding for Centers for Independent Living, they would no longer be there to assist people like me in getting out of nursing homes . The main reason being is that many others that can be transitioned to independent living will be stuck in the same facilities, without these programs being able to provide the same services that I was.

Independence Northwest , my Center for Independent Living, also provides other programs that include advocacy, information, referral services, peer counseling, and independent living skills training. Independence Northwest, my local center, also provides options counseling, , supportive housing for people living with HIV/AIDS and their families, youth services for young people with disabilities that are trying to make the transition from regular school into higher education, employment, and independent living. With the proposed cuts to centers, these programs would disappear. Then where would people be able to turn to get the help they need? I am grateful that the my Center for Living was there for me to help me transition out of a nursing home under Money follows the person, and I hope this will continue in the future. Thank you for your time. **Rosemary Smith, Torrington, Connecticut**